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Prologue

opposite. She represented glamour, sexuality, and fantasy, the "anything goes" girl.

By contrast, I was a young actress from a New York theatrical family. I'd been raised surrounded by books, classical music, writers, actors, and directors. My father, Lee, had cofounded the acclaimed Group Theatre in the thirties. Then he became artistic director of the Actors Studio, whose members included Jimmy Dean, Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, and Geraldine Page. Pop was known as an intellectual, a great teacher, and the father of "the Method." My mother, Paula, a beautiful, warm, vibrant young actress in the Group Theatre, had continued to perform while coaching and teaching others. Her acting career ended when she was blacklisted by the infamous McCarthy committee, which destroyed the lives of so many talented artists.

I was sure Marilyn and I had absolutely nothing in common. The distance between our worlds was so much greater than the three thousand miles between New York and Hollywood, I knew it could never be crossed.

Now, thirty-eight years later, I am—oh, God!—fifty-two, old enough to finally realize that *never* is one of those words that, after I say it, I eat it for lunch the next day. I did see Marilyn again. Like Goldilocks with the Three Bears, she would eat from my plate, drink from my cup, and sleep in my bed. In less than a year from our brief encounter, this blond bombshell fell into the midst of my emotionally land-mined family. Both our lives had changed drastically. My burgeoning career propelled me into the limelight. Her nine-month marriage to baseball great Joe DiMaggio ended in divorce. She fled Hollywood to make a new life in the East. There she chose my father to be the keeper of the flame, the caretaker of her luminous, underrated talent. Over the next eight years she became a private acting student of my dad: his favorite protégée, a second daughter to my mother, who coached her in all her films, a benefactor to my younger brother, Johnny, and an older sister to me. She was the adopted third child in our family.

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company, with Milton as her partner. He was a photographer but had never done any movies. Some of her friends, like Sidney in *Hollywood*, were angry with her for being impulsive and not choosing someone more experienced. It intrigued me that she would take the risk of ruining her career by alienating her studio. Katharine Hepburn and Gloria Swanson never fought like that. Of course, they hadn't played the parts she did, but what else could she play? She was charming, adorable, sexy, and funny, but that didn't mean she was an actress. She was beautiful, and apparently she had courage. I hoped she wouldn't slip and fall on her ass again.

The press went crazy over her leaving Hollywood. People joked about her acting talent, saying she was trying to be "a Bernhardt in a bikini." None of that stopped her, she took New York by storm, as she had Hollywood. People like Carl Sandburg and Isak Dinesen and Truman Capote wanted to meet her. Her magnetism attracted people from wildly diverse backgrounds, from politicians to poets and physicists. Reading about her, I was grateful for my family and background and new career. I dreamed on about the great things I would see and do and say, so maybe all those fascinating people would court me one day, the way they did Marilyn.

The main quarrel I had with fate was, it was sneaky. Even a storm played fair; it gives you warning, a flash of lightning, a distant rumble, a heaviness in the atmosphere, a pain in a toe as the pressure drops, a cloud on the horizon. Not life.

It was one of those early spring days when there's a kick in the air. It's nippy and hot at the same time and you don't know what to expect . . . from the weather, either. I'd gotten home from school early. With her usual dramatic flair, Mother waved her arms, motioning me to be still when I came into the house. My mother's penchant for drama had increased since she'd been blacklisted. All her creative juices flowed into our lives.

Marilyn and Me

dummy. They were the dummies. If they'd bothered to read the book, they'd know she was this sensual girl, a barmaid. I could really have played her."

She turned to look at me. "You know why I make fun of myself? So I'll do it before they do. That way it's not so bad, doesn't hurt so much. It's either commit suicide or laugh." She had this pensive look on her face, as if she were figuring something out.

Daylight was fading fast, and she switched on the lamp near the mirror. "And you know, since your daddy's given me his stamp of approval, other people are suddenly changing their tune. Only I'm not sure they believe it like he does."

Inside I was dying. I'd been one of those people who'd looked down at her aspirations. Thank God she couldn't read my mind.

In a stream of consciousness her voice flowed on. "I worked with this woman in California for years. She taught me, educated me, like your father, gave me books to read, but even she thought I was a dummy. He doesn't, and the most important thing is, with your father for the first time I feel it's okay to be me, the whole kit and caboodle, you know, the whole mess.

"I never dared to even think about it before—who's got time to think when you gotta survive? But now I want to be an artist, pardon the expression, a real actress. I don't care about the money and the fame, although I'm not knocking it, but like the man says, 'Life's not written on dollar bills,' right? Since I came here to New York, I feel I'm accepted, not as a freak, but as myself, whoever the hell that is. I'm kind of just finding out."

She was so open, her face flowing with fervor and longing, I felt glad for her, and I wondered if this was what my father was drawn to—this longing of hers.

She turned off the makeup light, and then, almost as if she'd made a discovery, she continued. "You know, for the first time in a long time I feel that something good is going to come out

Marilyn and Me

necessary as becoming an alcoholic or a drug addict. She's looking for a mother, father, family, all rolled into one. . . ." Ezra wanted to show a different Marilyn from the studio's version, or hers.

Mother defended her. "Let's face it, one rejection to a highly sensitive person is like a thousand to another. After that first betrayal . . . does it matter?"

In pursuit of the real Marilyn, Ezra took Mother and Steffi to dinner. He plied Mom, who didn't drink, with some disgusting sweet rum drink to loosen her tongue, but to no avail.

It was all much ado about nothing because *Time* edited the piece till they had an upscale movie magazine version.

"How could he learn the truth about a girl who's such a good liar?" Mother laughed. "As if there's one truth, anyway. All those facts he collected may have less to do with the reality than her fantasies." Mother spoke from experience. She was also a woman who more than once had molded the truth to suit her dreams.

In the pinch, Mother had done what everyone around MM did—she'd protected her as if she were a little girl. There is a child who lives in all of us, but Marilyn's lived so much closer to the surface. That little girl of Marilyn's seemed to absorb and carry the burden of all our collective abandoned children. Even I felt like her mother sometimes.

Josh was effusive in his praise of Marilyn's luminosity and brilliance—"genius like Garbo or Chaplin, mystery." By now people weren't laughing as hard. She was winning some grudging respect, but why was it so difficult?

In June *Bus Stop* was completed on time, and Marilyn and Mom flew home with not a moment to spare. Marilyn just had time to get married before she left for England to shoot *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

Marilyn and Arthur were married twice. A rabbi officiated at one service, at the house of Kay Brown, Arthur's friend and agent. The other was with a judge. "One time for each Gemini